

Joanna

By Paula Puddephatt

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Thirty years have elapsed. Precisely thirty.

No one visits the grave any more, not on the anniversary, or any other day. Has she been forgotten?

The yew trees remain. The timeless calls of woodpigeons punctuate the Spring air, warm but with a refreshing light breeze.

Joanna's cheating boyfriend, Daniel, didn't marry the beautiful, raven-haired Carlotta, the girl he cheated with. They were together for a few years, lived together briefly, and then either he dumped her, or she dumped him, or perhaps it was a mutual decision. Carlotta lives with her girlfriend, Yvonne, now. Daniel married Amy, and they have a fifteen-year-old daughter called Molly, whom they both adore.

Joanna's dad died a few years ago, and the remaining family have their "own lives", as Jo's mother, Sylvia, is quick to tell anyone who might, to any degree, question how completely forgotten her firstborn now appears to be.

Having committed suicide, on her own seventeenth birthday.

Joanna's two younger sisters are both married. Patricia married her childhood sweetheart, Darren, as everyone had always known she would, and the couple have two daughters and a son. Clare married a lovely guy named Simon, and they have two boys.

So, Sylvia feels no lack of grandkids. She also has her ninety-nine-year-old mother to consider, of course.

Sylvia doesn't have the time to keep dwelling on the past. None of them do. They lead busy lives, after all.

And dwell, they most certainly do not, apparently.

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